N.° 5
37
340
4474 d

# A SERMON

PREACHED BEFORE THE

UNIVERSITY of OXFORD,

At St. *Peter's*, on *Feb.* 19, 1769.

[ Price Six-pence. ]

A

# SERMON

PREACHED BEFORE THE

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD,

At St. Peter's, on Feb. 19, 1769.

[ Price Six-pence. ]

BRITISH MUSEUM

*The Enthuſiaſt's Notion of* Election *to eternal Life diſproved; or, God's Favour obtained by the Obſervance of his Laws.*

---

A

# SERMON

On I. CORINTHIANS, ix. 27.

Preached before the

UNIVERSITY of *OXFORD*,

AT

St. *Peter's* Church, on *Feb.* 19, 1769.

---

By JOHN ALLEN, *M. A.*

VICE-PRINCIPAL of MAGDALENE HALL.

---

*We muſt receive God's Promiſes in ſuch wiſe as they be* generally *ſet forth to us in Holy Scripture: And in our Doings,* that *Will of God is to be followed, which we* have *expreſsly declared unto us in the Word of God.*

Art. 17, of Predeſtination and Election.

---

OXFORD,

Printed for S. PARKER, and D. PRINCE: And ſold by J. FLETCHER, in St. *Paul's Church-yard, London.*

M. DCC. LXIX.

The Enthusiast's Notion of Election to eternal Life displayed; or, God's Favour obtained by the Observance of his Laws.

---

A

# SERMON

On I. CORINTHIANS, ix. 27.

Preached before the

## UNIVERSITY of OXFORD,



St. Peter's [illegible] Feb. 19, 1769.

---

By JOHN ALLEN, M.A.

Vice-Principal of Magdalene Hall.

---

We must receive God's Promises in such sense as they be generally set forth to us in Holy Scripture: And in our Doings, that Will of God is to be followed, which we have expressly declared unto us in the Word of God.

Art. 17, of Predestination and Election.

---

OXFORD,

Printed for S. Parker, and D. Prince: And sold by J. Parcombe, in St. Paul's Church-yard, London.

M. DCC. LXIX.

## I. Cor. ix. 27.

*I keep under my Body and bring it into Subjection: leſt that by any means, when I have preached to Others, I myſelf ſhould be a Caſt-away.*

THE Repreſentations that are made of Chriſtianity either to diſcredit its Evidence or diminiſh its Influence, are as many and as various as the Dictates of uninſtructed *Heads* and the Wiles of malicious *Hearts*: And the *Fervors* of Enthuſiaſm are often as miſchievous, conſequentially ſo, to our holy Religion, as the *cool* Spite of a ſober Deiſt. But when Injury is done to the beſt Cauſe in the World, it is of little Importance, who are the Authors of it, and it is certain that *one* Way of hunting *Religion* is the expoſing it to *Contempt*, which is effectually done by ſinking or undervaluing thoſe

Virtues which are the Fruits of a *firm Perſuaſion* that *It* came from God, and that the Obſervance of its Precepts conciliates his Favour. The religious Syſtems that encourage an Exemption from Duty are juſtly deteſtable, ſtanding in direct Oppoſition to Chriſtianity, which every where teaches its Followers to be active in the Exerciſe of every Virtue, and diligent in ſecuring the End of their Calling. For this Purpoſe St. *Paul*, that we might not want Incentives to Holineſs, has ſometimes Recourſe to *Figures* which exhibit ſtrongly and ſtrikingly the Nature of our Profeſſion and the Mode of diſcharging It. In this Chapter the Chriſtian Life is illuſtrated by Alluſions to certain Games well known to his Corinthian Converts, who are informed that the *Bruiſing* or Mortifying the Body ſo as to make it ſubſerve the Intereſts of the Soul, is neceſſary to the Attainment of celeſtial Happineſs. And that the Agoniſtical Ideas he employs may make the quicker Impreſſion on their Minds he intimates where the *Compariſon* fails with Regard to the two *Contentions*. *It* holds good in many Reſpects: but *herein* it is deficient, that whereas *One* only received the Prize in the Field of earthly Glory, *All*, by contending *lawfully*, *may*, in the Chriſtian

 Race,

Race, obtain a Crown of Glory that fadeth not away. Another Circumſtance or two might be added where the Gymnaſtic Expreſſions, which do not quite reach the Thing intended by them, ſuggeſt to a quick Underſtanding Ideas that exhibit powerfully the Nature of the Chriſtian Warfare. But waving this, I will try to make good the following Propoſition, "That an *abſolute* Elec-" tion to eternal Life is a Doctrine contrary to " Scripture and Reaſon; and that an Election " *conditional* is not attainable by Faith only." For this Purpoſe let us conſider

I. The *Character* of Him who kept under his Body and brought it, *&c.*

II. His *Motives* for practiſing ſuch Mortification.

III. The *Reaſonableneſs* of ſuch a Conduct; and *Laſtly*, What may be learnt from the Sum of the foregoing Particulars.

I. We are to conſider the *Character*, *&c.*

Next to the Bleſſed Virgin this Perſon ſeems to have been moſt highly favoured by the Godhead. *Enoch* walked with God. *Abraham* was the Friend of God. *Moſes* was emphatically the Servant of the Son of God.

*David* was the Man after God's own Heart. *Elijah* was the great reforming Prophet. *Joſiah* had hardly his Equal in any Liſt Regal or Prophetical. From *Iſaiah* to *Malachi* we hear of Viſions, Revelations, and Meſſages, communicated by Heaven of the utmoſt Conſequence to Thoſe for whoſe Sake they were given, and of ſtanding Uſe to the Church till Time ſhall be no more. Yet after all, the actual Tranſlation of Some, God's viſible Interpoſition at the Prayers and on the Behalf of Others, the great Elogys beſtowed on All, ſeem not ſingly or collectively to have placed any One ſo high in the divine Regard as the Apoſtle was, whoſe Character we are conſidering. And as under the old Covenant, fruitful of Inſtances touching God's Reſpect to Individuals, we meet with none of ſo peculiar a Caſt as *This*; ſo in the new Teſtament, if the Honour of being Harbinger to the Meſſiah, a Sight of his Tranſfiguration, a Converſe with him after the Reſurrection, a ſolemn Deſignation to the high Office of Apoſtleſhip and a View of the aſcending triumphant Jeſus do not reach ſome Particulars which diſtinguiſhed this Meſſenger of the Moſt High, He muſt be allowed to ſtand unrivalled and unexampled. For were his

Fellow

Fellow-workers in the Miniſtry, the eleven Apoſtles, immediately appointed by Chriſt and anointed by the Holy Spirit? So was He, and with Circumſtances which have no Parallel. Were they favoured with Viſions and Revelations? So was He, and with ſuch too as diſtinctly marked him who was born out of due Time. And if the Abundance of them gave a Title to Superiority, who in that heaven-taught, heaven-directed Society could vie with him? Was He behind the Chiefeſt of them in any Reſpect? Certainly the Humility that prompted Him to ſay of Himſelf that he was the leaſt of all Saints and not worthy to be called an Apoſtle elevates Him above the Pitch of the moſt inſpired Humanity. Did they preach Jeſus and the Reſurrection? So did He, and forced the Wiſdom of this World united at *Athens* to the poor Refuge of Mockery and to the miſerable Shift of *Felix* who pretended he would give him a Re-hearing. Did they prove from the Scriptures that Jeſus was the Chriſt? He did the ſame, with an Eloquence that hath no Example, and by Arguments that are irreſiſtible? Did they dwell on the intereſting Event of our Reſurrection conſequent upon That of our divine *Head* and Maſter? He

dwelt

dwelt likewiſe on the glorious Theme, and often delighted to dwell, putting vain Philoſophy to the Bluſh, and Science falſely ſo called, while he unfolded, as far as it was explicable, the very Mode of our Redemption from the Grave, and the celeſtial Clarity of the changed or glorified Body. A Myſtery! of which the World before had no Notice, no Conception! and which was reſerved to be delivered by that Man in Chriſt, who fourteen Years before had been caught up into the third Heaven, where he ſaw that Jeſus ſitting at the right Hand of God whom he had heard and ſpoke to in his Journey to *Damaſcus*, and afterwards into Paradiſe, where he converſed with the Spirits of juſt Men not *yet* made perfect, but waiting for that conſummate Bliſs which *they* could not arrive at nor was *he* re-admitted to till after the Reſurrection. Well then might this divine Writer ſay, "I will come to Viſions and Revelations "of the Lord." For he recounts ſuch as magnified the Grace and Condeſcenſion of God, and at the ſame Time confounded the Arts of his Opponents, whoſe whole Quiver of bitter Words muſt be emptied in vain when they found Humility in *One* who had been exalted to a View of the *beatific Viſion*.

For

For the Man who had been ſo aſtoniſhingly honoured was ſo far from being *elated*, that he never remitted from the Severity of his Labours, nor leſſened his Attention to that powerful *Confederacy* of the World, the Fleſh, and the Devil, by *which* the faireſt Virtue has been ruined, by which the holieſt Perſons have been vanquiſhed. I keep under my Body, &c. Strange Words theſe to come from ſuch an one as hath been deſcribed! And not the leſs ſtrange if it be conſidered that he was *fore-ordained*, *ſeparated*, *called*, *elected* to preach Jeſus Chriſt and him crucified. For if it be certain that his Converts were *called* according to God's Purpoſe, it is *as* certain (no Conſequence can be clearer) that he was *called* according to the ſame Purpoſe. So that this *Paul* of *Tarſus* was *One* whom God foreknew, and whom he thus foreknew, him he did predeſtinate to be conformed to the Image of his Son, and whom he did predeſtinate, him he alſo called, and whom he called, him he alſo juſtified, and whom he juſtified him he alſo glorified by giving him an Earneſt of that unutterable Bliſs of which others cannot taſte before they have paſſed through the Grave and Gate of Death to a joyful Reſurrection. What this Predeſtination

preciſely

preciſely ſignifies in is another Matter, but This may ſafely be aſſerted of it that from that Term nothing can be extracted which proveth a Coercion, a Fatality reſpecting Him or Others, that *They* were *ſo* called as that *They* muſt *neceſſarily* be for ever glorified. And This may be inferred from my Text, which ſpeaks, upon *Calvin*'s Hypotheſis, of vain Fears and fruitleſs Auſterities, and likewiſe from the *Monitions* given to theſe *called*, theſe *juſtified*, theſe *predeſtinated* Diſciples of the Goſpel, in *which* they are dehorted from Diſobedience to Government, from every Debt but that of Charity, from "Rioting and Drunkenneſs, from Chambering and Wantonneſs, from Striſe and Envying:" "In a Word, from making Proviſion for the Fleſh to fulfill the Luſts thereof." I will finiſh this Head with ſuppoſing that theſe Diſſuaſives are unmeaning and impertinent if Election and Reprobation are other than *conditional*.

Now the Motives for St. *Paul*'s keeping under his Body, *&c.*

II. (which was the ſecond Thing to be conſidered) may fairly be preſumed

1. A Conſideration of what Chriſt did for Mankind at his Death and Reſurrection.

2. An

2. An intimate Knowledge of human Nature, as it is *in itſelf*, and as it is renewed by *Grace* from on high.

3. A Review of the ſad Lapſes and total Apoſtaſys of many, who had been *ordained to eternal Life*, and had for a Time run well in the Chriſtian Race that was ſet before them. Of each curſorily.

1, And firſt, our Apoſtle was induced to the Mortification he practiced, &c.

Behold I bring you glad Tidings of great Joy, ſaid a celeſtial Meſſenger, which ſhall be to *All* People. Now an Errand ſo general and comprehenſive muſt needs be as *affecting* as it was *intereſting*. To *You* is born a Saviour who is Chriſt the Lord. Not to *You* excluſive of the reſt of Mankind, but to *You* as a Part of that World for which he is incarnate, and for which he will expire on the Croſs. The Doctrine of univerſal Redemption meets us ſo often in the ſacred Pages, that it is aſtoniſhing where Malevolence can find any Paſſage to diſtort to a contrary Meaning. If then *All* may partake of this ineſtimable Bleſſing, it is worth enquiring what our Saviour hath done for the World he condeſcended to viſit. To aſſert

that he hath put *All* or *Any* into a State of *actual* Salvation, is to ſpeak haſtily and incautiouſly. For the Terms of the Apoſtle's Commiſſion ſhew that the intended Salvation is propounded *conditionally*—"He that believeth and is baptized ſhall be ſaved."—It ſhould ſeem then that we are put into a *ſalvable* State only, and that if we are not *ſaved* our merited Miſery will be owing to our Non-Compliance with the Conditions of the new Covenant. Now that there is this Diſtinction between *Salvability* and *actual* Salvation it cannot be doubted when we read ſuch Words as the following—"Not willing that any ſhould periſh but that *All* ſhould come to Repentance—So God loved the World that he gave his only begotten Son that All that *believe* in Him ſhould not periſh but have everlaſting Life. So run that Ye may obtain. Ye *did* run well: Who did hinder you, that you ſhould not obey the Truth?" We find no *Impediments* thrown in their Way by God, or by his Meſſengers. The *Obſtacles* were inveterate Prejudices which might have been removed, or Luſts which might have been maſtered. St. *Paul* perceived Prepoſſeſſions in others which he had experienced in himſelf, and in recommending to them a Warfare

in which he was engaged, he ſufficiently intimates that no one is *crowned* or *ſaved* who doth not contend ſtrenuouſly and perſevereingly. And if any Meaſure of Grace or any Degree of Faith or any Certainty of *Election* make the *Salvability*, I mentioned, a Figment, there would be no Occaſion to *ſtrive* to enter in at the ſtrait Gate.

2. Another Motive for St. *Paul*'s living rigorouſly was an intimate Knowledge, *&c.* As the Corruption of human Nature is *radical* and univerſal, a reflecting Mind muſt be pained at a View of it. How much then muſt this Apoſtle be *affected* who could trace every natural and moral Evil to its Source, and mark diſtinctly the Effects of that *Sin* which made ſo great a Breach between God and the Creature? To *Him* the moſt ſecret Fibres of that *Root* of Bitterneſs muſt ſtand expoſed, and to ſo piercing a Sight every Malady muſt be doubly afflicting—while an horrible Dread would overwhelm him upon a Conſciouſneſs that He was a Part of the contaminated *Maſs*, which was capable of only a *partial* Purgation, for in the greateſt Proficient in Piety there will always be Filth enough left to denominate him a miſerable

Sinner: becauſe no Son of *Adam* was ever *ſo good* that he could not become better: and between the heavenly Reward and Him that aſpires to it moſt ſucceſsfully, there are ſo many Obſtacles to be removed, ſo many Labours to be undergone, that the Conceit of a Decree irreverſible, of a Faith uniformly operative, and of a Juſtification in this Life final will appear to be what it really is, a mere Dream, an Union of Cyphers, a Collection of nothing. No wonder then that ſo holy, ſo wiſe, ſo learned, ſo *inſpired* an Apoſtle ſhould ſhew, both by his Doctrine and Example, the Futility of ſuch Pretences, and by keeping under his *Body*, &c. prevent his being *diſapproved* and rejected by the Judge of Quick and Dead, who rewardeth and puniſheth according to the Deeds done in the Body.

3dly, To this Activity and mortified Practice St. *Paul* was further ſtimulated by frequent Reviews of the Miſcarriages which Hiſtory relates of *ſeveral* who had failed in their virtuous Courſes. We may juſtly ſuppoſe that every Inſtance of this Kind in the old Teſtament roſe to his afflicted Imagination, *which* added to the Apoſtaſys in his

own

own Days muſt have been too alarming to a wiſe Man for him not to profit by them. He indeed could, at the Time, ſay of Himſelf, and of many of his Diſciples, "We "are not of them, who draw back unto Per-"dition, but of them that believe to the "ſaving of the Soul." But it is *probable* He could recount many ſingular *Defections* from the Truth among thoſe who had been baptiſed and inſtructed by his Brother *Peter*; and it is likely that *Barnabas*, and other Apoſtles had complained of grievous Relapſes in the Churches that they had planted.—This, I think, is more than Conjecture, becauſe it it *certain* that our Apoſtle had experienced great Variety of Change in the Faith and Manners and Reſolution of Numbers, "whom he had turned from Darkneſs to Light, and from the Power of Satan unto God." Some made Shipwreck of their Faith after they had embraced the Goſpel and exerciſed "themſelves in having a Conſcience void of Offence towards God and towards Man." Such were *Hymeneus* and *Alexander*, with whom if we aſſociate *Diotrephes*, who *prated* againſt St. *John* with malicious Words, we have a Triumvirate that typify in a moſt lively Manner thoſe unmerciful Religioniſts who inveigh with

with Words that eat, as doth a Gangrene, againſt *All* that hold Chriſtianity to be a reaſonable Inſtitution, and *Schiſm*, in this Land, to be ſinful, and that the *Curſe cauſeleſs* of brainſick Viſionaries *will not come*. But theſe Men were not the *only Apoſtates* who exerciſed the Patience of the Apoſtle. One *Demas* forſook him, having loved this *preſent* paltry World. In *whom* every temporizing Eccleſiaſtic is ſtigmatized to the End of Time; but *of* whom it is no where ſaid that he ever returned to his Duty. But perhaps we may be reminded of the Names of *Eubulus*, and *Pudens*, and *Linus*, and *Claudia*, as Examples of Perſeverance in the Profeſſion of the Goſpel; Names certainly that will be had in everlaſting Remembrance! But then we muſt not forget that our Chriſtian Hero acquaints us with an *Apoſtaſy* that has no Parallel in the Annals of Time ſince the Flight at *Gethſemane*. An *Apoſtaſy* that is only credible becauſe Inſpiration relates It! An *Apoſtaſy* not of *half-Believers* or of *extempore Chriſtians*, but *of* Numbers whoſe *Faith* and Obedience were celebrated throughout the whole World! — Of thoſe *who* had obeyed *from the Heart* that form of Doctrine which was delivered to them: *who* were, in

one

Word, "made free from Sin, and were become Servants to God, having their Fruit unto Holineſs and the End everlaſting Life." The aſtoniſhing *Defection* is thus recorded — "At my firſt Anſwer [or Apology before the Prefect of the City] no Man ſtood with me, but *all Men* forſook me." Theſe were his Roman Converts. And now what is become of the Document of the Saint's final Perſeverance? If it be ſaid that they might be re-inſtated by *his* praying that God would not lay it to their Charge. I anſwer that *Peter*'s Faith failed, though Chriſt himſelf prayed it might not; and it is obſervable that *Peter* was recovered not by Faith but by Repentance.

III. I proceed to conſider thirdly, the Reaſonableneſs of St. *Paul*'s Conduct in his Purſuit of God's Approbation.

The repeated Exhortations we meet with to work out our Salvation are ſtrengthened by the whole Current of *their* Lives *who* gave them. Inſtruction and Example were united in the *inſpired Moraliſts*; who never propoſed a Duty which they themſelves did not perform, nor recommended, at any Time, a Virtue which they did not practice,

nor

nor forewarned others of an approaching Danger which they declined to encounter. All this was arduous, but it was reaſonable; and, notwithſtanding their *Vaunts*, certain modern Apoſtles are the very worſt Copyiſts of thoſe exemplary *Sufferers*. It is very eaſy for Men to talk of *Perſecution* with the Magiſtrate on their Side, of faſting in the midſt of *fulneſs of* Bread, and of laying down Necks to be trod upon while the Owners are riding and "roaring in the midſt of their Congregations, and ſetting up their Banners for Tokens." *Martyrdom* is the higheſt Love of God, and the laſt Expreſſion of Charity to Men, but I fear they that vapour *moſt* about embracing the *Stake*, are more likely to make other Men Martyrs than to die *ſuch* themſelves; and ſhould there be a *Smell of Fire* in this Land, for Righteouſneſs Sake, I believe it would not be found to have paſt on their Garments. *Their Friends* of the Church of *Rome* have drawn beautiful Pictures of this *exalted Virtue*, but, as *One* well obſerves, what they have handſomely *deſcribed*, they have left our Church to *practice*. But to return.

If the Kingdom of Heaven, or the Chriſtian Profeſſion be like to a Race it is reaſonable

reaſonable to run *ſo* as that we may obtain. If it reſembleth the Contention in which the Gauntlet is uſed, it is proper to be *always in Practice*, that we may ſtrike ſure, and not loſe our Blows with beating the empty Air. If the Church of Chriſt be *militant*, "let not him that girdeth on his Harneſs, boaſt himſelf as he that putteth it off." For it is Time enough for any one to write *Vici* on his Shield, when he has fought a good Fight, and finiſhed his Courſe. If it was right in the *Corinthians*, "ſtriving for the Maſtery, to be temperate in all Things," *ſurely* it is ſo in Thoſe who are contending not for a Chaplet, a vegetable Crown, a Garland of Leaves that ſoon wither and fall to Pieces, but for a Crown of Glory that *fadeth* not away.

Again. If there be two Gates, and we are commanded to *ſtrive* to enter in at the ſtrait one, we muſt ſtrain every Nerve, and call forth all our Strength, and, though repulſed, regain the Ground we have loſt, and bear up ſtill to the Paſſage that lets into Bliſs: otherwiſe our Damnation will be juſt. If indeed our Fate did *not* depend upon our *Choice*,

but our Calling and Election were *abſolutely ſure*, we might ſleep on and take our Reſt; and when the Archangel's Trumpet ſhould awaken Us we might advance, without any Miſgivings, to ſit down with *Abraham*, *Iſaac*, and *Jacob*, in the Kingdom of Heaven. But as other *Regions* and other *Company* are provided for the heady, the proud, and the boaſtful, let us conclude with a tranſient View of the Conſequence of "always abounding in the Work of the Lord." By Faith and *Patience* we inherit the Promiſes. By *Striving*, we enter in at the ſtrait Gate. By *Labouring*, we obtain the Meat that endureth to everlaſting Life. By *Working out* our Salvation we enter into the Joy of our Lord; by *Preſſing* toward the Mark we receive the Prize of the high Calling of God in Chriſt Jeſus; by *Giving all Diligence*, we make our Calling and Election ſure; by *Overcoming*, our Names will not be blotted out of the Book of Life: And laſtly, by *Watching* and *Praying* always, we are *accounted Worthy* to ſtand before the Son of Man: *i. e.* we ſhall carry our Cauſe at his Tribunal, be accounted and pronounced *Righteous* in his Sight, according to that *Law* of Grace and Mercy, which He, as our Saviour,

viour, hath procured, ratify'd, and confirmed, with his moſt precious Blood.

One of the Elders ſaid to St. *John*, "What are Theſe who are arrayed in white Robes? and whence came They?" It is anſwered, "Theſe are They who came out of *great Tribulation*, but they ſhall *hunger* no more, neither *thirſt* any more, neither ſhall the Sun light on them, nor any *Heat*. For the Lamb who is in the midſt of the Throne ſhall *feed* them, and ſhall lead them unto living Fountains of Waters: and God ſhall wipe away all Tears from their Eyes.

*F I N I S.*

viour, hath procured, ratify'd, and confirmed, with his most precious Blood.

One of the Elders said to St. *John*, "What are These who are arrayed in white Robes? and whence came They?" It is answered, "These are They who came out of *great Tribulation*, but they shall *hunger* no more, neither *thirst* any more, neither shall the Sun light on them, nor any *Heat*. For the Lamb who is in the midst of the Throne shall *feed* them, and shall lead them unto living Fountains of Waters: and God shall wipe away all Tears from their Eyes.

10 FE 59